

4. NEST PROTECTION BY THE INDIAN HOUSE CROW (*CORVUS SPLENDENS* LINNAEUS)

The Indian House Crow is both a solitary and colonial nester. A colony of two to ten or more nests are generally found in trees like the Mango (*Mangifera indica*), Banyan (*Ficus bengalensis*) and Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*). It appears that crows prefer to build nests in colonies. A few pairs may, however, be found to nest solitarily on Coconut (*Cocos nucifera*) trees, cornice of a house, electric pole and the like, near colonies. During the nesting season members of the same colony usually collect nest-material from near the nesting site. Quarrels among them are observed only when different crows (not the mates) happen to spot the same material. During the early phase of the nest-construction they are totally indifferent to the intrusion of the Pied Myna (*Sturnus contra*), Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*), Jungle Babbler (*Turdoides striatus*) and a few other smaller birds into their nesting area. Curiously, members of the same colony vigorously attack 'foreign' crows (that is, crows not belonging to the same colony) jointly and defend a certain area around the colony against the intruders.

On 7 April 1965, a colony of five nests was found on a peepul tree situated on the southern bank of the Circular Canal near its confluence with the Hooghly River, North Calcutta. There was another colony consisting of eight nests situated on the northern bank of that canal which is about 35 metres wide. On many an occasion crows nesting on the north bank of the canal alighted near the peepul tree on the south bank in quest of nest-material. On every occasion the crows of the south bank colony that happened to be there lost no time in attacking the intruding crow vigorously. The intruder almost always beat a hasty retreat. In the later part of the nesting season, when the eggs and young were in the nest, one of the mates of each pair of the colony usually perched alert very close to the nest. At that time they were very aggressive to not only the 'foreign' crows, but also to other birds. But no such hostility was found to occur among the crows of the same colony until the nest itself was intruded into by a neighbouring crow. Similar behaviour was also observed during the breeding seasons of 1966 and 1967 in four different colonies at Sinthi, a suburb of Calcutta.

From the above observation it appears that a nesting crow defends a small area around the nest against the intrusion of other crows of the same colony, and a larger area (nearly 30 sq. m.) from the intrusion of 'foreign' crows and other birds.

This interesting aspect of nest-protection by the Indian House Crow has not been mentioned in the earlier works on the subject.

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5. NEW RECORDS OF BIRDS FROM THE GIR FOREST

During a survey of the Jamwala, Sirwan, Sasan and Jasadhar areas of the Gir forest the following species and subspecies of birds not previously recorded from the Gir were collected.

Taccocua leschenaultii sirkee (J. E. Gray) Sirkeer Cuckoo.

	Wing	Tail	Bill
2 ♀♀	150	215-235	29

Chrysomma sinensis hypoleuca (Franklin) Yelloweyed Babbler.

	Wing	Tail	Bill
1 ♂	65	85	14

Muscicapa parva parva Bechstein Redbreasted Flycatcher.

	Wing	Tail	Bill
1 ♂	69	48	9

The species has not been recorded from the Gir forest, though, Sálím Ali (1954-55) reported its occurrence in Saurashtra.

Muscicapa tickelliae tickelliae (Blyth) Tickell's Blue Flycatcher.

	Wing	Tail	Bill
3 ♂♂	74-76	56-58	13-16
2 ♀♀	67-72	52-54	15

Dicaeum agile agile (Tickell) Thickbilled Flowerpecker.

	Wing	Tail	Bill
1 ♂	62	30	8
1 ♀	60	32	9

Lonchura punctulata punctulata (Linnaeus) Spotted Munia.

	Wing	Tail	Bill
1 ♀	54	35	11